

## Against the Grain

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# Digital Conversations: The Changing Landscape

Paul Chilsen

*Carthage College*, [pchilsen@carthage.edu](mailto:pchilsen@carthage.edu)

Todd Kelley

*Carthage College*, [tkelley@carthage.edu](mailto:tkelley@carthage.edu)

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# Digital Conversations — The Changing Landscape

Column Editors: **Paul Chilsen** (Chair and Associate Professor of Communication & Digital Media, Carthage College, and Director of the Rosebud Institute) <pchilsen@carthage.edu>

and **Todd Kelley** (Vice President for Library and Information Services, Carthage College) <tkelley@carthage.edu>

**Column Editors' Note:** *Greetings. As we stated at the outset of the Digital Conversations series, this will be an actual conversation — and we want you to join in! To that end, we have started recording our conversations and making them available for your perusal. You can go to our link <http://www.carthage.edu/media/chilsen-kelley-conversation.html>, or scan our QR code and watch the full conversation. Once there, we encourage you to join in the conversation as well. — PC & TK*



**Paul Chilsen:** Todd, this is our first actual recorded digital conversation and I think it's appropriate that we're in a studio, in director's chairs. We're in an appropriate setting to start to talk about digital media and digital literacy and digital fluency because we are being very digital right now.

**Todd Kelley:** Paul, welcome to the library. We are in this nice little media studio, but we have to mention we are in one of the most used of all the facilities in the **Hedberg Library** at **Carthage College**. That speaks well to **Carthage** and its interest in the future.

**Paul:** I think that's a highly valid point — when **Carthage** built this library they really did take a bold step forward just over a decade ago, being progressive in having facilities available at a smaller liberal arts school to instruct students in the direction of media, digital media, film, television, screen journalism — those kinds of pursuits. But I don't think it's just that — and I think it's changing.

**Todd:** If I'm not mistaken that was probably about the same time the CDM Department was created. You're currently chair of that department.

**Paul:** That's correct.

**Todd:** Could you talk a little about CDM?

**Paul:** CDM stands for Communication and Digital Media and as you probably know it's the youngest department at **Carthage**, making it almost as old as the library. It's actually a little younger than the library, so my department is younger than your department... (laughs). We are charged with a whole new approach to communication here at **Carthage College**, a liberal arts institution ensconced in the Midwest. I have been Chair for the last four years and I have been trying to understand and direct our curriculum and mission as a subset of the overall mission of the college, but also as our own unique mission for the department — to try to direct our curriculum in a progressive way because there are a lot of things changing in the world of media and communication — and even literacy. I think one of the issues that we share in common is that we walk along two sides of the same line. I think that's why it's good for us to be having this conversation.

**Todd:** In the twentieth century, the subject of English was a requirement for all college students. Today, while it's certainly important for students to study English, the change that I see is a focus on bringing the spoken word and visual image into every student's college

experience. This new focus is probably one catalyst that led to the creation of CDM. The people here that were looking at the future ten years ago may have imagined that it would be really important for our students to understand digital media and how to blend digital media with traditional writing and reading across the curriculum. That seems to be the impetus behind the creation of your department.

**Paul:** I think it took a lot of foresight, and I believe it was an insightful choice. They pulled elements from the art department and from theater to create a whole new department. And you're right, it kind of typified the direction things looked to be going in academia and in the world of media. It seems it was a smart move. I joined the department a few years after it started. And a few years after that, I started the **Rosebud Institute**.

The **Rosebud Institute** is built on the idea that we really need to be teaching media and media literacy much like we teach writing and speaking. Part of the **Rosebud** mission states that we live in a world of spoken media, written media, and now *screen* media, and we need to start to teach people how to operate in that kind of world in a very specific and directed fashion, just like we do in other disciplines.

**Todd:** Right, and to me media literacy is a lot like knowing how to read and like getting inside the text and not just look at the text superficially but to get into it deeply. On the other hand, media fluency is more like creating your own text, if you will, by putting together all the components that are available through technology that everyone can potentially use to communicate in the most meaningful way.

**Paul:** Yes. I think that's the most meaningful and engaged way. From a liberal arts perspective — and under the umbrella of the **Rosebud Institute** — we're not trying to turn out filmmakers or TV journalists, or create what I like to call "mini-Spielbergs," but rather we are trying to create people who know how to communicate in the language of the land. That seems a critical difference between us and say, a film school. You and I are talking about fluency, and attaining fluency so you can engage in society in the way society communicates.

**Todd:** Exactly, so one of the challenges that I think we see as we talk about this is that we would like to reach all our students with these kinds of experiences. Obviously students can become CDM majors, but what about the other students who are not CDM majors? What do we do to give those students opportunities to create meaningful communication using the full palette of technologies and media available to them? One of the small steps that we have taken in the library in the past few months is engaging students in becoming Wikipedia editors. We think that is a small step in the right direction. We have students who are interested in all

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sorts of discipline knowledge and they would like to share their information and knowledge and be able to really get into their subject, and becoming a Wikipedia editor is a great way for students to get involved in meaningful information literacy and fluency activities. They can use images and as well as text.

**Paul:** There are two parts to what you were just saying. Anytime we give students the opportunity to learn about and use basic tools to create output that is connected and meaningful — that is, output that addresses something they want to say, and is constructed with the notion of an audience — any of those kinds of creations, those undertakings, are highly valuable. However, that kind of creating often runs seemingly antithetical to a lot of things that end up happening.

I sent you this piece this morning, a screen grab from a local public library. Now public libraries recognizably have a different workflow and protocols for the things they have to address, but if we can go to that image I sent you, you can see that they have purchased all these iPad Minis, and if you look at the text in that particular promotional piece, it's talking about handing iPad Minis over to children so they can play, and draw, and game — all those kind of things. Now certainly that has value in that they are learning and becoming comfortable with the technology, but if it's not attached to any instruction — or, like in your Wikipedia example, it's not attached to any sort of intentional output — it seems a missed opportunity to move them towards eventual fluency. I think that the idea of intention is really key. It is what lifts screen and digital communication out of the entertainment mode, encapsulating it and embracing it as another mode of communication. It's not all that different than teaching a child to push graphite around on a piece of paper. When a child does this, almost immediately we steer them towards making meaning: "draw a tree or a flower, make a card for mom, write your name." We do this intrinsically, I think, because we know that we communicate by pencil and paper and it is a critical form of expression and communication. We don't really do the same thing with the screen. We regard it differently, as somehow less important, almost passing. Too often it seems, we leave children — and eventually students — to their own devices... with these devices. That's a critical distinction. Intention has to be part of the equation.

**Todd:** The catchphrase on the **Rosebud** Website of "watch, see, do" starts to capture this spirit of a whole new generation of students. Students have been doing a lot of watching and a lot of seeing. And there's really no reason that they need to wait any longer for the doing. As they construct their own meaning — to be able to communicate what

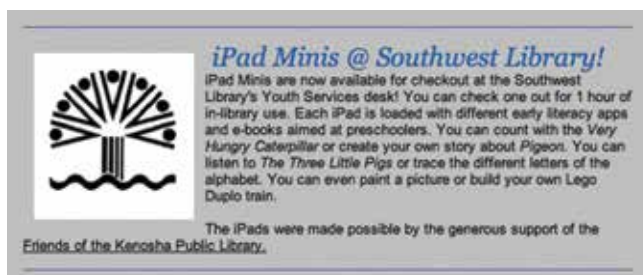
they're thinking is an important step towards feeling individually fulfilled and being knowledgeable citizens.

**Paul:** Right, feeling like they're engaged, feeling like they have...

**Todd:** A voice.

**Paul:** Right, a voice; and finding their voice and using that voice in an intentional way. Those things are hugely important. So the digital conversation that you and I have set out to explore, is to define the things that we hold in common. As we promised in the first iteration of this series of articles, we would push forward on something different — something new here at **Carthage**. Perhaps you can talk a little bit about that, at least at the basic level.

**Todd:** Well, one of the aspects of managing the library is being able to look to the future and think about how to transform the library in a regular episodic fashion to keep up with the students as they see the world today and also to anticipate how students will need to learn tomorrow. One of the things that we've been doing is we've been involved in



a campus-wide exercise to look at the library. It is a great library, and it is only a little over ten years old. We are certainly very blessed to have this library, but we're not sitting on our laurels. We are thinking about the kinds of things you and I've just been talking about in terms of the kinds of support, the types of spaces, the relationships, and the various technical and knowledge resources we might make available to our students, faculty, and staff.

It is a very exciting exercise to think about bringing all these resources to bear and recreate the library in the next few years. There is not just one right answer to the questions we've been asking, but I think the fact that we've been asking those questions and thinking about how to involve students as well is critically important. In our conversations, one of our basic tenets has been to look at the issues together with faculty and students so that we have the past, present, and future all accounted for in our planning process.

**Paul:** Yes, and it is something that is highly interdisciplinary, crossing all departments. I meant to speak to that earlier when you asked about how we reach students *outside* of CDM. Students taking one of our majors under the Communication Digital Media Department get core instruction in these digital media areas, but nobody else is really required to do so across the academy. Perhaps eventually we need to look at this as some sort of core requirement. If we're sending students out into a screen-based world without some basic understanding of how to communicate in the

language of the screen, then I think we're sending them out a little bit unprepared.

**Todd:** Unprepared, absolutely!

**Paul:** You made an excellent point earlier — How do we make that happen in a way that is embraceable by other disciplines?

**Todd:** It is one of the challenges that we in the library have taken on because the library is central to the campus in so many important ways both physically and in the center of the academic enterprise. What we would like to do is focus on this issue in such a way so that every aspect of the digital communication environment is taken into account here in the library in terms of what we do to provide support. Just understanding what those resource needs are is a tall order.

**Paul:** It is a hugely tall order. And I'll add some tallness to it if I may.

There's a graduate student that went through the **Rosebud** program here and works in a local Experiential Learning school. She wrote her final Masters thesis on more intentional instruction and use of digital media in the classroom. I saw her a few days ago and she said that the e-portfolio part of her program is working really well at the school, but she was a little dismayed because the other components of the program are getting co-opted. She reports that the creativity aspect of all this is being compressed or squashed. She talked about how the devaluing of creativity, which seems to kick in right around second grade, is an unfortunate byproduct of the current educational system. I think one of the things that digital media fluency can do, is give students permission to be creative — to use their creative thought processes to express complex notions: ideas, formulas, ideologies. In this way their individual, unique creativity can be embraced rather than back-burnered.

**Todd:** Yes — certainly we don't want to put anyone in a box, in the digital media box, so having a large welcome mat in the library is important. Some people have put forward the notion that the library should be about creating a digital scholarship, and certainly scholarly communication is very important, but we do not want to limit literacy to scholarly work and we do not want to limit media fluency to digital scholarship.

**Paul:** Right!

**Todd:** It is one strand of the entire communications web that we all live in today, and information fluency and information literacy are just as important in all types of communication. Students are involved in social, cultural, and co-curricular communication exercises and to be able to support them, whatever their digital communication needs are, is again, a tall order. We may never quite get there, perhaps, but it is something to strive for.

**Paul:** I would agree. As we indicated in the first piece of **Digital Conversations**, what will be interesting for us is to track our own progress here at **Carthage** — the steps that we're trying to take. As you said at the very beginning of this discussion today we're not saying this is the only way, but you and I are coming to the table — well, to a couple of chairs anyway —

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and through dialectic, and through some actual doing, we want to figure out a way to begin to manage this very tall order.

**Todd:** Well Paul, perhaps in our next conversation we can list some of the goals that we can tackle together.

**Paul:** I think that will be valuable. I also think that perhaps in the next conversation we can reach out to others and see what



some of their feedback and input might be.

**Todd:** What a great idea. In this world of digital communication, the sky's the limit.

**Paul:** So why not join in the conversation?

**Todd:** That's right.

**Paul:** And it doesn't have to be two guys sitting in director's chairs in a darkened room.

It can be the world chiming in, and perhaps together we can solve problems in a better way.

**Todd:** Thanks, Paul.

**Paul:** Thank you, Todd. I've enjoyed it. 🍌

## And They Were There from page 73

### *Is ILL Enough? Examining ILL Demand After Journal Cancellations at Three North Carolina Universities* — Presented by **Kristin Calvert**

(Western Carolina University); **Rachel Fleming** (Western Carolina University); **Janet Malliett** (Winston Salem State University)

*NOTE: William Gee (East Carolina University) did not present in this session.*

Reported by: **Calida Barboza** (Ithaca College) <cbarboza@ithaca.edu>

The research presented in this session was designed to mitigate concerns about potential interlibrary loan (ILL) demand resulting from journal cancellations at **East Carolina University**, **Western Carolina University**, and **Winston Salem State University**. This research confirms earlier findings that showed marginal impact on interlibrary loan after cancellation projects. In the discussion of their results, the presenters wondered if the increase in total journal use they saw after the cancellation project at **Western Carolina University** could in part be attributed to the implementation of a Web-scale discovery service and/or user satisficing. They asked what implications the results of this study have for collection developers, publishers, and database providers.

### *It Can Be Done! Planning and Process for Successful Collection Management Projects* — Presented by **Pamela Grudzien** (Central Michigan University);

**W. Lee Hisle** (Connecticut College); **Fran Rosen** (Ferris State University);

**Patricia Tully** (Weslyan University)

Reported by: **Jennifer Carroll Giordano** (University of New Hampshire Dimond Library) <Jennifer.carroll@unh.edu>

Four different collection management projects, all of them involving withdrawing large numbers of items, were described by four academic libraries. There were central themes running through all of the projects including: the importance of planning and developing a good tool to use to identify candidates for withdrawal (all worked with outside services to develop this tool), the importance of communicating the project to campus community and inviting faculty to provide feedback, the importance of managing faculty feedback and expectations, and finally, the importance of finding a balanced approach to weeding local collections while maintaining cooperative agreements regarding retention of last copy/copies.

This session proceeded as advertised in the conference program. 🍌



*That's all the reports we have room for in this issue. Watch for more reports from the 2013 Charleston Conference in upcoming issues of Against the Grain. Presentation material (PowerPoint slides, handouts) and taped session links from many of the 2013 sessions are available online. Visit the Conference Website at [www.katina.info/conference](http://www.katina.info/conference). — KS*

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